

Waterville Wastewater Infrastructure Needs



Figure 1: The Town of Waterville is the seat of Douglas County in central Washington.

More information

Ecology spoke with the Town of Waterville to gather a representative example of small community wastewater infrastructure needs. The Town's current population is 1,185.

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ADA Accessibility

To request an ADA accommodation, contact Emma Hanson (details above), or visit <https://ecology.wa.gov/accessibility> for relay service or TTY call 711 or (877) 833-6341.

Community vision

The Town of Waterville is situated on the Waterville Plateau at the base of Badger Mountain. Surrounded by wheat fields and boasting over 300 days of sunshine, Waterville has become attractive to the newly-retired seeking a friendly community and slower pace of life. It has been the home of the NCW Fair and Rodeo for over 100 years.

The Town is considered economically disadvantaged with over 60% of its school system's students qualifying for low- and reduced-income lunches. The largest industry for Waterville is agriculture, primarily dryland wheat and cattle. Other basic industries for Waterville are government, education, manufacturing, and local retail.

The town's vision includes economic revitalization of their downtown area through slow but sustained growth, including:

- Affordable housing,
- Access to health care,
- Attracting additional businesses and creating jobs, and
- Developing a strong school system through community and taxpayer support.

The Town recently obtained status as a Certified Legal Government (CLG) for Historic Preservation. With this, they plan to revitalize their Historic Downtown through partnerships with building owners, Douglas County Port District, and utilization of CLG funding options. This will increase potential tourism opportunities which are in their infancy.

Existing wastewater infrastructure

Waterville's growth over the last 40 years has been limited – first by access to water resources and now by an inadequate sewage system. The Town's clay-lined and undersized sewage lagoon system risk overflow into nearby creeks and actions to extend their life are stopgaps at best.

An updated general sewer plan and engineering report were completed in early 2020. The Town is currently replacing key areas of the sewer collection system to correct excessive flows to the lagoon system due to infiltration. The Town has replaced 3,000 of 52,580 feet of sewer lines and 24 of 100 manholes.

Needed wastewater infrastructure

In the next six years, the Town estimates a cost of about \$17.5 million to meet the following wastewater infrastructure needs:

- The Town's highest priority is to construct a new lagoon system for their wastewater treatment plant (WWTP). The current system is past its useful life, annually exceeding legal capacity for the past 12 years. To achieve compliance, the Town has begun planning to move the system away from Corbaley Creek, to avoid the possibility of groundwater contamination. The estimated cost to complete this project is \$10 million.
- The Town has made headway by initiating the purchase of land for the new lagoon and sprayfield and applying for Ecology funding for the design of a new WWTP.
- The second highest priority is to continue replacing the Town's aging sewer collection system to limit system infiltration. This will cost about \$5 million and the Town needs assistance with an asset management system. The Town is currently designing collection system improvements through Ecology funding.
- The Town's lowest priority is the expansion of their sewer collection system to areas not currently served, as these areas are growing. Some areas are below grade, and need pumping systems. This work will cost about \$2.5 million. The Town needs low cost, efficient options for this expansion.

Fiscal standing

Debt

Table 1: Waterville's estimated debt.

Debt To	Debt For	Principal Balance	Debt Paid Off (Estimated Year)
United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)	Water infrastructure	\$338,592	2033
Public Works Trust Fund	Construction and engineering for the improvements to the sewer collection system	\$1.1 million	2039
Ecology	Design engineering for improvements to the sewer collection system	\$42,500	2042
USDA	Water infrastructure	\$880,376	2049
Ecology	Design engineering for wastewater treatment plant	\$540,000	Anticipated, application still awaiting funding
Public Works Trust Fund	Water infrastructure	\$171,206	Unknown

Funding sources

Sewer rates increased \$6 per month in January 2020 bringing the current monthly bill to a flat rate of \$45 per equivalent residential unit. An increase of \$10-\$12 is planned for January 2021. The rate increases are based on a rate study and income survey conducted by Rural Community Assistance Corporation. These increases are necessary to fund debt incurred with the Public Works Trust Fund loan.

At this point in time, for the community to take on additional debt for a new lagoon system, rates would need to be increased to \$147 a month, a 325% increase. This rate would cover existing and anticipated debt and operations and maintenance costs.

Public involvement

The Town hopes to continue efforts to engage public interest and support in infrastructure, through public meetings, education through their website and quarterly newsletters.

Beyond funding, Ecology can help by speaking with the Town Council to communicate why wastewater infrastructure updates are needed.